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AUTHOR Simmons, Joanne M.
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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on critically analyzing both the potential and the problems of practitioner action research as a means of genuine professional development for classroom teachers today. Action research is a process of systematic inquiry and of knowledge, skill, and attitude growth in which classroom teachers on either an individual or collaborative basis investigate a self-identified instructional problem and attempt to better understand and improve the teaching/learning process occurring in their classrooms. This paper's critical analysis involves a review of the issues surrounding teaching as an emerging profession, what is known about effective staff development practices, and what is emphasized in the literature on school workplace conditions in which teachers function on a day-to-day basis. Finally, the paper reviews the potential as well as various serious dilemmas inherent in the use of action research as a staff development experience. The nature of such dilemmas are discussed in terms of certain cautions which should be noted regarding practitioner action research at this time. A seven-page list of references concludes the document. (JD)

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ACTION RESEARCH AS A MEANS OF PROFESSIONALIZING STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS & SCHOOL STAFFS

by

Joanne M. Simmons

Michigan State University/Department of Teacher Education

MSU Grand Rapids Teacher Education Center

Keeler Bldg./Suite 70

Grand Rapids, MI 49503

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the procedures, problems, and potential of action research as a means of long-term, meaningful, collaborative and/or individual professional development for classroom teachers. The critical analysis of action research as a professionalizing staff development experience which is presented in the paper involves: (1) a review of the issues surrounding teaching as an emerging profession, (2) what is known about effective staff development practices, and (3) what is emphasized in the literature on school workplace conditions in which teachers function on a day-by-day basis.

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Note: I want to gratefully acknowledge the influence of a friend and colleague, Georgea M. Sparks of Eastern Michigan University, in clarifying some of the ideas contained in this paper through our many enthusiastic discussions and collaboration in writing related material.

Introduction

Recent months have been marked by an unprecedented flood of national attention and critical commentary on K-12 schools and their instructional practices--e.g. A Nation at Risk, Goodlad's A Place Called School, Action for Excellence, and Boyer's High School. Although these reports are all based on a call for "excellence" in education, they differ in their specific recommendations for K-12 curriculum content, the desirable instructional climate and structure in schools, and the role of teacher vis-a-vis administrators and others in decision-making related to instructional matters in the classroom. Most pointedly, the current accomplishments of teachers and principals in the nation's schools and their initial preparation by colleges of education have been the subject of such critical discussion in newspaper articles, television specials, public meetings, and legislative groups since last year.

While these reports have been helpful in recognizing the genuine difficulties existing today in the school workplace because of the flat career structure and uniform reward system available to classroom teachers, they have put forth controversial recommendations regarding new roles and financial incentives supposedly designed to stimulate teachers to such "excellence". The underlying assumption of such solutions to problems seems to be that, by providing a "bigger carrot", classroom teacher "rabbits" can be motivated to "jump" more enthusiastically, further, and longer than before. Perhaps, it is not surprising that such a mentality exists in this discussion in which the predominate lay people contributors naturally understand such problems and recommendations in terms of traditional, extrinsic motivational patterns in business, industry, and child-rearing.

In summary, it is fair to say that the resulting discussion thus far can be characterized as more politically-based than as rooted in what we know about school workplace conditions and effective professional development for teaching in today's classroom. Such a more comprehensive view of the proper complexity of the problems surrounding instructional change, teacher development, and school improvement today reveals the serious error of believing that the root of the problem is simply one of better motivation and increased extrinsic rewards for teachers. Rather, the discussion needs to consider new professional expectations and preparation for teachers and related modifications in the school workplace lives of classroom teachers.

Focus of this Paper

This paper will focus on critically analyzing the potential and difficulties of practitioner action research as a means of genuine professional development for classroom teachers today. Action research is a process of systematic inquiry and of knowledge, skill, and attitude growth in which classroom teachers on either an individual or collaborative basis investigate a self-identified instructional problem and attempt to better understand and improve the teaching-learning process occurring in their classrooms. This paper's critical analysis will involve a review of the issues surrounding teaching as an emerging profession, what is known about effective staff development practices, and what is emphasized in the literature on school workplace conditions in which teachers function on a day-by-day basis. Finally, this paper will review the potential as well as various serious dilemmas inherent in the use of action research as a staff development experience. The nature of such dilemmas will be discussed in terms of certain cautions which should be noted regarding practitioner action research at this time.

In an effort to contribute to the emerging body of literature on staff development for classroom teachers, this paper seeks to understand and critically synthesize some recommendations and cautions regarding staff development experiences which can enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of teachers. Such a goal for staff development programs goes far beyond the more typical one afternoon session emphasizing teachers' awareness level of new instructional ideas and practices. It demands, in addition, that teachers develop a professional knowledge-base, a critical reflectivity about themselves and the teaching-learning process occurring in their classrooms, a sense of professional efficacy and autonomy to function as the one who is responsible for instructional decision-making in their classrooms, and a spirit of commitment to continue their own professional development efforts on a life-long basis.

This topic has its roots in my own experiences during the last three years as a field-based teacher educator involved with some 50 classroom teachers doing action research projects. In addition, this paper seeks to use hypothesis generating and grounded theory approaches (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to critically review the literature and practices of others also involved in practitioner action research in order to clarify future research questions (Simmons, 1984), to better shape staff development practices (Simmons & Sparks, in press), and to inform staff development practitioners and policy-makers of such hierarchical distinctions among the goals and activities of various types of staff development programs for classroom teachers today.

Characteristics of Classroom Teaching as Work

In addition to examining what is known about teachers' school workplace conditions, it is important to focus briefly on what is involved in classroom

teaching as work as a basis for thinking realistically about professional staff development. Naturalistic studies describing classroom teaching as an occupation have been available for almost two decades (e.g. Waller, 1967; Jackson, 1968; Sarason, 1971; Lortie, 1975), but these studies have not influenced staff development or educational reform policy-making to any large degree. Lieberman and Miller (1984) have provided staff developers and others with an excellent synthesis of this literature in their book, Teachers, Their World, and Their Work. Their discussion emphasizes the social, psychological, and political components of teaching. Lieberman and Miller point out that such realities of teaching as work are important because they shape teachers' professional and personal identities and influence how they develop as teachers during their careers.

The life of a classroom teacher can best be characterized as action-oriented in both public and private ways, containing job responsibilities which present irreconcilable dilemmas (Berlak & Berlak, 1981) demanding complex judgments. This occurs in a quick-paced environment in which knowledge about both inputs and outcomes is incomplete and uncertainly linked. Teachers are constantly pressed to act with little time available for thoughtful reflection about alternatives or underlying values inherent in their constant, interactive decision-making in the classroom. Neither the technical knowledge nor the time exists for carefully diagnosing the thousands of instructional decisions which teachers face. In addition, reliable knowledge about the probable and the actual consequences of their instructional interventions with students is unavailable in the immediacy of the moment. In the words of Sanders & Schwab (1980, p.272), "The work of teaching consequently is highly intuitive. Teachers are obligated to cultivate sound professional judgment---the ability

to act upon decisions with minimal information and entailing ambiguous consequences".

In addition, while teachers work in isolation from each other in the cellular structure of the typical school building, they are sharply aware of the pressure to be authoritative, capable and respected in the eyes of their students and administrators. At the same time, they often lack substantive interaction and feedback from other adults; except for the relatively superficial comments from other educators or for public relations type parental concerns, little is said about their day-to-day work. Their triumphs and sorrows in classroom teaching are determined more by criteria which emphasize their pupils' good behavior and responsive attitudes rather than pupil cognitive learning, teachers' own satisfaction, or comments from colleagues (Harootunian & Yarger, 1981).

Finally, a word about the role of typical teacher preparation in teacher's work. The constant press to act in a fast-paced environment full of conflicting, simultaneous signals creates a need for classroom teachers to filter out certain stimuli and to simplify and "chunk" what remains into familiar routines. Such an action-demanding environment frustrates attempts to thoughtfully address instructional problems, to consider assumptions and alternatives, and to reflect on outcomes. Therefore, the need of beginning teachers for workable techniques, for specific direction about familiar tasks and routines, often has formed the essence of traditional apprentice-like teacher preparation programs. The depth and complexity of professional knowledge, thinking, and decision-making about instructional matters is yet rarely addressed, demonstrated, and practiced in our teacher preparation programs in this country. Rather, the emphasis more frequently is on conveying

procedural knowledge (i.e. knowing how) to teachers with a neglect of conditional knowledge (i.e. knowing when and why).

As a result of their own teacher preparation, their isolation from observing other classroom teachers in action, and the lack of time for substantive dialogue, many classroom teachers come to believe that the most useful source of knowledge about teaching practices is their own trial-and-error experience on the job. They come to believe that effective teaching behavior is private, situation-specific, intuitive, and a matter of developing one's own personal style.

With these views, and lacking a common pedagogical language to describe what occurs in their classrooms, teachers often hesitate to discuss instructional difficulties with other educators for fear of appearing to be incompetent or too overly worried about their professional effectiveness. However, this lack of exposure to other people's teaching practice and of any objective standards of evaluation leaves many teachers fundamentally uncertain and self-doubting about the quality of their own teaching. Such a tremendous need to keep up their own confidence about the quality of teaching done makes it emotionally difficult for teachers to analytically examine their own practices with a critical eye toward further growth and improvement (Lieberman & Miller, 1984). This need to "look good" occurs on both an external and internal level for many classroom teachers. In an enterprise which speaks so frequently of "learning" and "growth", it is ironic that the current organizational structure of teaching as work often emphasizes staff development needs assessment as the identification of deficits, rather than as growth goals.

For teachers, there is always the awareness that the tasks involved in classroom teaching are never done--one can always do more and do it better.

For many, the constant tension of this early idealism fades into a guilty awareness which mellows over the years as the standards for their own performance diminish to doing enough to get by in the eyes of the students and school administration. In addition, since each of these standards is external to the teacher her/himself, the effect is to frustrate the development of the teacher's own professional self-concept and her/his identification with any collegial resources and professional standards of practice. Lanier (1984) refers to this situation of the teacher as a "technician" rather than as a "professional".

Current School Workplace Conditions of Classroom Teachers

Interest in the topic of classroom teachers' school workplace conditions is generally based on the simple ecological assumption that they (as well as principals, etc.) contribute to and are affected by the school workplace conditions in which they are employed. Such workplace conditions are best understood as aspects of the social, emotional, and political climate of the school--i.e. beliefs, norms, values, expectations, attitudes regarding the role and activities of classroom teachers in this case.

School workplace conditions have been investigated both in a naturalistic, descriptive manner and in a theory-based, comparative fashion. The overwhelming conclusion in these studies has been that the typical school workplace today has several, seriously harmful influences on classroom teachers, particularly on their professional commitment, satisfaction, and growth. Such workplace characteristics not only discourage able new people from becoming classroom teachers but also diminish the job satisfaction, commitment, and actual performance of those who enter teaching and remain in classrooms today.

Two studies by Little (1982) and by Joyce and McKibbin (1982) shed light on the contrasting dynamics of collegial interaction and professional growth actually found in various schools. Little's year-long study was a focused ethnography of six, specially selected urban desegregated schools with contrasting levels of instructional success and of teacher involvement in formal programs of staff development. She found that:

> More successful schools, particularly those receptive to staff development, were differentiated from less successful and less receptive schools by patterned norms of interaction among staff. In successful schools, more than in unsuccessful ones, teachers valued and participated in norms of collegiality and continuous improvement (experimentation). They pursued a greater range of professional interactions with fellow teachers or administrators, including talk about instruction, structured observation, and shared planning or preparation. They did so with greater frequence, with a greater number and diversity of persons and locations, and with a more concrete and precise shared language. (p. 325)

Such collegiality, however, was not simply a function of frequency of interaction. Little cautions that frequency of professional interaction is "inseparable from judgments of worth and relevance" (p.333). In other words, when teachers experienced such interactions as practical, valuable, and related to specific aspects of their classroom teaching, they saw such frequent interaction as desirable. Conversely, they saw them as threatening and/or time wasting if the substance of such interactions was impractical, unimportant or too personally exposing. This cautionary finding underscores the importance of staff development programs which develop a shared professional language for practitioners, provide opportunities for them to interact and develop personal trust and respect, and cultivate the belief among practitioners that teaching is an important activity which is capable of description, analysis, and evaluation.

Joyce and McKibbin (1982) use the results of their survey/interview of over 3000 teachers and a multi-year case study of staff development and innovations in a few selected school sites to develop a useful model of individual teacher attitudes toward growth and of the influence of the school environment on those attitudes. In their model, school environments can be classified as either highly energizing, maintaining, or depressant in relation to teacher growth. Teachers and their attitudes toward professional and personal growth can be distinguished as five points along a continuum: omnivores, active consumers, passive consumers, resistant, and withdrawn.

Joyce and McKibbin point out that the desirable match of positive individual teacher growth states and energizing school environments is all too rarely found in the real world of schools. They conclude by urging that the frequently separate programs of staff development and organizational development be consolidated to address both of these areas simultaneously. Such a model also allows us to seriously face the important question of individual and school environment "readiness" or various "barriers" to professional growth opportunities. Finally, given the ecological perspective on teacher growth and school workplace environments, we see that professional development for individual classroom teachers, even well-motivated ones, is not so simple as it might first appear to be (Sanders & Schwab, 1980).

Schlechy and Vance (1983) use their research findings on teacher background characteristics and employment supply-demand statistics to construct their argument that a serious management crisis exists today because of the way in which current school workplace conditions negatively affect the recruitment, selection, and retention of intellectually talented, self-motivated, autonomous individuals as classroom teachers. They identify major factors in the current

school workplace on which they base their carefully reasoned argument.

> We do suggest four obvious features of schools that discourage the academically proficient and offer possible ways of altering these conditions. These features are (1) the tendency for all salary increases to come within the first third of a teacher's working life; (2) the lack of substantially different career stages within the job of the classroom teacher; (3) the tendency of schools to militate against shared decision-making and problem-centered analytical discussion among adults; and (4) the tendency for the informal culture of schools, which reflects an ethos of nurturance and growth, to be dominated by a management structure that is punishment-centered and bureaucratic. (p.478)

They repeat the frequent research finding that collegial environments in schools are rarely found although "almost all research on effective schools indicates that schools in which teachers engage in a great deal of job-related discussion and share in decisions regarding instructional programs are more effective than schools in which decisions are made by rule-bound bureaucratic procedures" (p. 479). They say this situation is the result of several factors including the lack of a shared language to describe the work of classroom teaching (Lortie, 1975), the lack of time and opportunity for teachers to interact with each other, and the influence of historical and sexist management-worker tensions between school administrators and classroom teachers.

In summary, given this situation and characteristics of teaching as work, classroom teachers today generally do not have access to professional knowledge, dialogue, decision-making, and leadership opportunities related to instructional improvement matters (Glickman, 1984-85; Lieberman & Miller, 1984; Sanders & Schwab, 1980). Thus, recent education reform efforts are doomed to failure conclude Tye and Tye (1984), based on their analysis of data in John Goodlad's A Study of

Schooling (1983) regarding typical teacher isolation in the school workplace. Furthermore, as Schlechy and Vance remind us, many of the intellectually most capable and autonomous people are not attracted to a career in teaching today and of those who do become teachers, many do not remain for long because of such a crisis in current school workplace conditions. The school environment typically does not encourage or reward substantial teacher analytical reflection, dialogue, or experimentation concerning instructional practices in classrooms nor allow them access to the power necessary to make important changes in the wider context of the school. In writing of the conditions necessary for teacher growth and development, Galloway, Seltzer, and Whitfield (1980) have said:

> Conditions of demand and pressure escalate on teachers when they know their views will go unheard. When professional practice becomes suspect in the eyes of insiders, much less outsiders, the temptation is to stop sharing information and to withdraw in a protective shell of isolation. Too many teachers see their own development as matters of existence and survival without benefit of interaction with others. As long as we view teachers as incapable agents of change, staff developers are stuck with limited conceptions of the very clients they mean to value. (.....)
>
> To the degree that teachers fail to achieve professional collegiality, they run the risk of individual estrangement and alienation in their own work environment. When we fail to attend to human support systems that make work satisfying and rewarding, we undermine ourselves. A climate for growth and development implies trust, respect, and communicative access. Given such a climate for professional relationship, teachers are in a much better position to deal with multiple demands and pressures (p. 264-265).

Rhetoric and Reality Regarding Teaching as a Profession

Heated discussion concerning the questionable status of teaching as a profession today can be found in recent educational literature (e.g. Corrigan, 1981; Lanier, 1984) and bibliographies (e.g. Martin, 1983; Schwanke, 1982).

One of the landmark reports in this area is Educating a Profession: Report of the Bicentennial Commission on Education for the Profession of Teaching (1976) prepared by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. The authors of this report (Howsam, Corrigan, Denemark, & Nash) review the literature on professional occupations and conclude that teaching is not at this time a profession but rather a semi-profession. They provide the following list of characteristics of a profession (p. 6-7):

> 1. Professions are occupationally related social institutions established and maintained as a means of providing essential services to the individual and the society.
>
> 2. Each profession is concerned with an identified area of need or function (e.g., maintenance of physical and emotional health, preservation of rights and freedom, enhancing the opportunity to learn).
>
> 3. The profession collectively, and the professional individually, possesses a body of knowledge and a repertoire of behaviors and skills (professional culture) needed in the practice of the profession; such knowledge, behavior, and skills normally are not possessed by the nonprofessional.
>
> 4. The members of the profession are involved in decision making in the service of the client, the decisions being made in accordance with the most valid knowledge available, against a background of principles and theories, and within the context of possible impact on other related conditions or decisions.
>
> 5. The profession is based on one or more undergirding disciplines from which it draws basic insights and upon which it builds its own applied knowledge and skills.
>
> 6. The profession is organized into one or more professional associations which, within limits of social accountability, are granted autonomy in control of the actual work of the profession and the conditions which surround it (admissions, educational standards, examination and licensing, career line, ethical and performance standards, professional discipline).
>
> 7. The profession has agreed-upon performance standards for admission to the profession and for continuance within it.

8. Preparation for and induction to the profession is provided through a protracted preparation program, usually in a professional school on a college or university campus.

9. There is a high level of public trust and confidence in the profession and in individual practitioners, based upon the profession's demonstrated capacity to provide service markedly beyond that which would otherwise be available.

10. Individual practitioners are characterized by a strong service motivation and lifetime commitment to competence.

11. Authority to practice in any individual case derives from the client or the employing organization; accountability for the competence of professional practice within the particular case is to the profession itself.

12. There is relative freedom from direct on-the-job supervision and from direct public evaluation of the individual practitioner. The professional accepts responsibility in the name of his or her profession and is accountable through his or her profession to the society.

The remainder of their report involves recommendations for the types of changes which must be made if teaching is to become recognized as a mature profession. In summarizing the characteristics listed above, the major points they emphasize have to do with the need for (1) identifying a professional knowledge-base as a basis for prolonged and specialized teacher preparation, (2) establishing a professional governance structure, and (3) developing greater autonomy, commitment, and responsibility for instructional decision-making and life-long learning among teachers. They conclude, "What the teaching profession needs is a totally new set of concepts regarding the nature of today's society, its educational demands, and the kind of professional education necessary to produce <u>teacher-scholars</u> who have the courage and competence to reform public education in America." (p. 138) (N. B. emphasis added). They recognize that such a future necessitates changes in both the workplace setting of teaching and in the teacher and her/his preparation.

In this discussion concerning teaching as a profession, it is possible to separate out issues dealing with self-governance, licensing, differentiated roles and rewards for teachers, and funding patterns for training programs from those which most concern us here as staff developers. Points 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, and 12 from the AACTE report above have implications for staff development programs providing continuing education for teachers. They are concerned with the need to provide teachers with access to a professional knowledge-base for their instructional decision-making and to develop greater professional identity, self-confidence, autonomy, and commitment in teachers. An additional point involves the importance of recognizing the need for life-long education for teachers in order for them to remain informed and competent in light of continuous changes occurring in both professional and social arenas.

The current emphasis in many teacher preparation programs on practical know-how to the neglect of in-depth, specialized knowledge related to the complexities of instructional decision-making is interrelated with the second point about the need to develop increased teacher autonomy and self-confidence as professionals. Lanier (1984) discusses the incidental effects of current teacher preparation programs on teacher autonomy, identity, and responsibility in this way:

> Surface attention to the in-depth knowledge required for exercising sound judgments on such matters implies that the real decision-makers are the specialists, publishers, and administrators who determine schedules, create curriculum guides, prepare and select textbooks and tests, and devise management systems for teachers. The exercise of teacher judgment, within the broad policy framework of standard curricula and instructional practices, receives insufficient attention. Thus, teachers come to enact the role of technician, a role that requires them to follow the prescriptive directions of managers. (p. 22-23)
>
> An unanticipated consequence of the top-down, management-dominated, school improvement effort for today's career teachers has been a decrease in their sense of responsibility for the outcomes of schooling and a loss of

> satisfaction in their work. Facing an already difficult and increasingly complex assignment and then denied the intrinsic rewards that come from self-initiation, problem-solving, and the exercise of professional judgment, teachers look more and more to extrinsic rewards and alternative employment. (p. 20)

The emphasis placed by these teacher education authorities on developing a professional knowledge base for teaching is in sharp contrast to situations described earlier in this paper regarding classroom teachers' beliefs that obtaining knowledge of effective teaching practices is largely a matter of trial-and-error experience by each individual on the job. Regarding this need for a professional knowledge base, Griffin (1984) writes:

> Teachers tend to depend upon craft knowledge rather than a carefully constructed, systematically codified, and widely-agreed-to knowledge base (Lieberman & Miller, 1979). Their actions appear to be based more on what they have learned to do over time than on what has been shown by theory or research should be done. Their beliefs tend to override what knowledge is available. The demands of a given situation at a given time are more likely the sole or primary determiners of decisions than is a body of knowledge available to "teachers only". There is, in short, a "technical core" deficiency (Williams, 1982).
>
> Professionals, by strict definition, work from a knowledge base that is largely unavailable to persons outside the profession. There is some evidence to suggest that teachers "teach as they were taught" (Goodlad, 1983). If this is so, everyone who has gone to school for a period of time could qualify as an expert on teaching. (p. 19)

In addition to the role played by the action-oriented demands of the school workplace as it is currently organized (discussed earlier), Griffin does not place the blame for this situation on classroom teachers but rather <u>on their preparation programs</u>. He writes: "...the research on teaching findings, if used appropriately and, in some cases, cautiously, can be considered a piece of a reasonable knowledge-base for doing the work of teaching. But it is rare to

find this body of information central or even peripheral to a teacher education effort. This condition appears to be changing somewhat, but the nature of the change can often be characterized as an inappropriate use of the knowledge." (1984, pp. 19-20)

The inappropriate use of research knowledge that Griffin refers to involves the distinction between teacher preparation programs which (1) identify rules for effective practice, to on the other hand, programs which (2) stimulate both procedural and conditional knowledge, reflective dialogue, analysis, and continuous experimentation concerning effective classroom practices. In the latter case, the research process (i.e. constructs, questions, assumptions, limitations, models) as well as research findings become powerful tools for expanding classroom teachers' professional knowledge, critical thinking and action, and for examining the meaning and function of the common-place in the classroom which has been previously taken-for-granted (Clark, 1984; Simmons, in process; Simmons & Sparks, in press).

Such an approach to staff development contains rich possibilities for teachers developing increased professional self-confidence and antonomy, a common, pedagogical knowledge and language to describe their work and for providing genuine collegial interaction in an atmosphere of mutual discovery, rather than isolation and defensiveness, in the school workplace. The realistic breadth and depth of such professional preparation for teachers and the reality of continual changes occurring both in society and in professional knowledge underscore the need for such teacher preparation to be recognized as a life-long, on-going effort.

Thus, those with an interest in professionalizing teaching today would do well to create staff development programs which emphasize increased teacher pedagogical knowledge, professional efficacy beliefs, internal locus of control

beliefs, critical thinking habits, risk-taking behaviors and attitudes, growth seeking habits, organizational and communication skills related to teacher leadership, and dedication to internally-derived professional standards for one's own work that go beyond the minimum. In effect, a crucial goal of continuing education programs is for teachers themselves to acquire an appreciation of the importance and complexity of their roles, to develop greater knowledge of their own genuine instructional effectiveness, and to identify future professional growth goals in an atmosphere which expects and rewards continuous professional development rather than regarding it as "fixing deficits".

Such a view carries clear implications for the goals, content, techniques, length, and format of such professionally-oriented staff development programs. These implications will be discussed next.

A Framework for Viewing Staff Development Programs

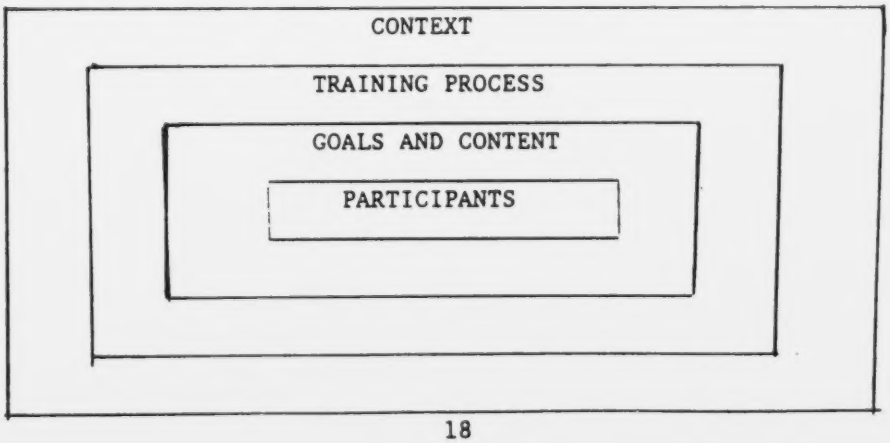
Although in its infancy, solidly done research related to staff development programs is increasingly available as a resource for those responsible for implementing programs for classroom teachers. This literature may be separated into three categories. First, and the most directly relevant, are meta-analyses on staff development programs themselves. These review the relative effectiveness of various training processes, techniques, content materials, etc. in relation to different characteristics of teacher participants and various goals for staff development programs. Historically, this body of literature began with Lawrence (1974), and it has continued with Mertens (1982), Joyce and Showers (1983), and Sparks (1983). Secondly, we have reviews of literature and practice in areas such as the school context and characteristics of the participants in staff development programs which are

more indirectly useful---e.g. teachers' level of cognitive development (Bents & Howey, 1981; Oja, 1980), teachers' career stages (Christensen, Burke, Fessler, & Hagstrom, 1983), principles of organizational development (Roark & Davis, 1981), and all of these areas (Griffin, 1983). Finally, there are less solidly based prescriptive compilations involving descriptive research of current staff development practices including those by Arents, Hersh, and Turner (1980), by Wood, Thompson, and Russell (1981), and by Wood, McQuarrie, and Thompson (1982). These represent the "accumulated wisdom" of staff developers rather than controlled, program effectiveness research studies.

It is outside of the purpose of this paper to summarize all of the above in terms of what is known about effective staff development programs. Interested readers are directed, rather, to these specific references, particularly Lawrence (1974) for a historical perspective and then Dillon-Peterson (1981), Mertens (1982), Joyce and Showers (1983), and Sparks (1983) for the most important material.

In her 1983 article, Sparks provides a very useful model (see Figure 1) displaying four vital components of staff development programs: (1) goals, (2) content, (3) training process, and (4) context. To this model, we can add a fifth component: (5) participants.

FIGURE 1: MODEL OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS--- A NESTED PROCESS



As with any model, the usefulness of this one is dependent on its congruence with all of the various types of specific examples of staff development programs which it seeks to abstractly profile. In this case, we turn our attention to examining the use of action research as a type of staff development program which emphasizes inquiry-oriented professionalizing type outcomes for classroom teachers. This will be analyzed eventually in terms of the Figure 1 model.

Inquiry-oriented, Professionalizing Staff Development Programs

There is a small but growing body of literature available concerning teacher education/staff development (TE/SD) which would emphasize the development of inquiry skills and professional perspectives in teachers as the desirable program outcomes. This literature finds its roots in the ideas of John Dewey (1904) and in what is written concerning the conditions needed for teaching to become a profession. This literature includes critical analyses of current practices and proposed new directions and rationales (e.g. Champion, 1984; Feiman, 1980; Gideonse, 1984; Johnston, 1984; Nolan, 1982; Tymitz-Wolf, 1984; Zahorik, 1981; Zeichner, 1983) as well as analytical descriptions of particular TE/SD programs whose processes and outcomes attempt to implement and test these goals (e.g. Cohn, 1981; Erdman, 1983; Haigh & Katterns, 1984; Myers & Stallings, 1984; Shultz & Yinger, 1982; Simmons, in process). Only the latter two deal with staff development programs for experienced teachers.

A. program goals

In discussing four alternative paradigms of teacher education, Zeichner (1983, p. 5) provides an excellent explanation of what is being called inquiry-oriented, professionalizing staff development in this paper.

> The final orientation to teacher education to be explored in the present paper is one which prioritizes the development of

> inquiry about teaching and about the context in which teaching is carried out. According to the advocates of this approach, the focus on fostering the development of orientations and skills of critical inquiry does not imply that technical skills of teaching are somehow seen as unimportant. On the contrary, the assumption underlying this approach is that technical skill in teaching is to be highly valued not as an end in itself, but as a means for bringing about desired ends. Questions about what ought to be done take on primary importance and the process of critical inquiry is viewed as a necessary supplement to the ability to carry out the tasks themselves.

Thus, we see that such a view has very specific implications for the types of goals which are posited for these staff development programs.

> As Wehlage (1981) correctly points out, there has been a long history in U.S. teacher education of efforts to promote the development of "inquiry-oriented" teacher education. Conceptualizations have been developed and programs have been implemented which have as their central aim the development of "habits of inquiry." For example, there have been proposals for the development of "teacher innovators" (Joyce, 1972), "teacher scholars" (Stratemeyer, 1956), "teachers as inquirers" (Bagenstos, 1975), "teachers as action researchers" (Corey, 1953), "teachers as participant observers" (Salzillo & Van Fleet, 1977), and "self-monitoring teachers" (Elliot, 1976-77). Although these proposals differ substantially on their definitions of inquiry, they all represent attempts to prepare teachers who have the skills to do and the inclination and skill to analyze what they are doing in terms of its effects upon children, schools and society (see also Cohn, 1979; Feiman, 1979; Tom, 1981; Wright, 1978; Zeichner, 1981; Zeichner & Teitelbaum, 1982). [....]
>
> The fundamental task of teacher education from this point of view is to develop prospective teachers' capacities for reflective action (Dewey, 1933) and to help them examine the moral, ethical and political issues, as well as the instrumental issues, that are embedded in their everyday thinking and practice. The teaching of technical skills associated with inquiry (e.g., observation skills) and the fostering of a disposition toward critical inquiry (a "critical spirit") becomes the axis around which the preparation revolves. The development of technical skill in teaching and the mastery of content knowledge is always addressed within this broader framework of critical inquiry and is viewed as a process of mastery that will bring about worthwhile ends. (Zeichner, 1983, p. 5-6)

Such goals for staff development programs go beyond their more typical emphasis on imparting only new pedagogical skills and materials and enhancing teachers' personal development. Rather, these goals emphasize developing teachers' expanded professional knowledge base for making conscious instructional decisions, an attitude of reflective questioning about those decisions and the influences upon them, a set of inquiry skills, and the underlying professional self-confidence and critical thinking abilities to enable them to do so. In terms used by Howey (1985), these goals involve teachers' cognitive development, theoretical development, professional development, and career development.

B. program content

Having posited such goals, the implications for staff development program content may be derived. In order for teachers to function in the ways described above, they need advanced, research-based knowledge concerning the elements of effective instructional decision-making---e.g. the teaching-learning process, characteristics of learners, and the structure of subject matter. In addition, critical knowledge concerning the role of schooling within the broader context of society is important as a basis for raising questions as well as doing such instructional decision-making in the classroom. Finally, attention to teachers' skills and knowledge of inquiry processes which may be appropriately used in classroom and school-based investigation and their attitudes toward this are warranted. In this case, research constructs, questions, assumptions, limitations, models, methodology, findings, and the researchers' own examples all become powerful tools for expanding teachers' thinking and teaching practices which have been previously unexamined on a more conscious level (Clark, 1984; Simmons & Sparks, in press).

As was said earlier, it is important to distinguish among the possible relationships which can exist between the use of research in staff development programs and corresponding classroom teaching practices. These range along a continuum from using research, particularly its findings, to identify rules for effective practice to, at the other extreme, using research to stimulate

reflective dialogue, analysis and continuous experimentation concerning effective classroom practices. In this latter way, educational research becomes, not a source of prescriptions for practice, but rather a tool to help a classroom teacher think about the teaching-learning process occurring in his/her own classroom. Any particular piece of relevant research becomes a stimulus that can help enrich a teacher's thinking (e.g. his/her "map" of effective instruction) and suggest alternative actions that could be taken.

This view builds also on what Joyce and Showers (1983) have emphasized as the central problem of transfer remaining yet in staff development programs, i.e., in teachers knowing when to use new practices and how to use them appropriately for different students, settings, and curriculum goal structures. A dual notion of the "mutual adaptation" process proposed by Berman and McLaughlin (1976) can be used to explain what occurs here, too. As a teacher comes to know and then to use a new practice, that practice is adapted to fit the teacher's own circumstances. However, we are beginning to have evidence (Oja, 1980; Simmons, in process) that a teacher's own thinking about the elements of the teaching-learning process and about him/herself and the students also has changed during this process of staff development. In light of the emphasis coming to be placed on teachers as instructional decision-makers, we could even hypothesize that unless the teacher's way of thinking and looking at what happens in the classroom is changed, little lasting improvement in actual classroom practice is likely to occur (Simmons & Sparks, in press).

It is important to re-emphasize that consideration of research focusing on effective teaching-learning-schooling practices is not the only relevant or important content that should be used to stimulate teachers' reflective analysis of their practices. Knowledge of district educational policies,

community values, students' developmental characteristics and needs, subject matter, and the practitioner's own beliefs and needs are all relevant and necessary material for reflective analysis in a comprehensive staff development program of the type described here.

However, the outcome being emphasized here is one of the teacher as an autonomous, committed, inquiring, instructional decision-maker, rather that as one who blindly follows prescriptions from either research, policy, community mores, or administrative dictates. This point touches on the characteristic of professionals as autonomous decision-makers who are thoughtful, intelligent, and responsible. As Buchmann (1983) emphasizes, an illusion of "right answers" and "conclusions" in research used in staff development programs can obscure the real process of research as question asking. This can, indeed, have the ironic affect of inhibiting the development of critical thinking and inquiry skills in teachers and inhibiting a sense of their own efficacy as instructional decision-makers. Each staff development program content should be affirming of teachers' currently effective practices as well as capability-building and inspiring (rather than guilt-producing) regarding future professional development goals for the classroom teacher.

C. <u>program processes</u>

Next, we turn our attention to the type of staff development program processes which are appropriate for fostering such professionalizing outcomes in classroom teachers. In his 1983 article cited earlier, Zeichner also poses the question of the relationship of a TE/SD program, its institutional form, and the social context of it and schooling in general. This question emphasizes concern for the effects of the hidden as well as the explicit curriculum of staff development programs. These hidden curriculum effects are created, in part, by the nature of the instructional strategies, activities, and materials used in programs and by the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of

staff developers themselves. Champion (1984, p. 90-91) speaks to this issue this way:

> Sharon Feiman-Nemser (1980) has proposed that growth and reflection become procedural aims for teacher education, recognizing that such "commitment to reflection and growth represents a major departure from conventional views about teaching teachers and major trends in research on teaching" (p. 133). In a recent article, Feiman-Nemser described efforts in teacher education centered around process goals. She emphasized that "Growth and reflection do not lend themselves to short-term interventions or simple techniques" (p. 140).
>
> One can extrapolate that if Feiman-Nemser's proposal, and John Dewey's earlier (1904), were to become reality in teacher education curricula, students of teaching would have to become more actively involved in hypothesizing, problem-solving, collecting data, and the like <u>throughout</u> their professional programs. These aims clearly would not compartmentalize well. Hypothesizing 201 and Problem-solving 202 followed by Reflection 310 would be missing the point. If growth and reflection are real procedural aims, lists of findings from research become merely one of the many tools with which the teacher educator works and not ends in themselves.
>
> Gary Fenstermacher (1980) recently proposed that extracting critical teaching <u>skills</u> from the effectiveness research is not the paramount issue. He suggested that students of teaching need role models of the <u>manner</u> in which to deal with new ideas, to question, to ponder, to inquire, and to solve problems. In Fenstermacher's view, it would be very important for teacher educators to be keenly aware of the manner in which they link knowledge from research---as ammunition, as rules for teaching, or as another kind of evidence to consider.

Thus, we can derive some ideas concerning the process of such inquiry-oriented, professionalizing staff development programs. They would be: (1) relatively long-term in time structure, (2) psychologically supportive of the risks inherent in trying out new roles, and (3) provide carefully sequenced demonstrations and actual experiences of reflective instructional problem-solving, beginning with relatively simple, concrete

situations which then gradually become more complex and demand greater integration of previous learning.

The most widely cited authors of reviews of research on inservice education are Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers (1983). The studies they have reviewed tend to view teacher improvement simply as behavior changes---a more limited view than the one taken in this paper. The model of training processes which they propose as being most effective in producing specific behavior changes in the classroom includes five steps: (1) presentation of theory, (2) modeling of the practices, (3) practice with the new behaviors, (4) feedback, and (5) coaching in the classroom to be sure the practices are used as intended.

Following what has been said about "mutual adaptation" of research and the more ambitious staff development goals identified earlier, it becomes possible and necessary to adapt Joyce & Showers model for staff development (Simmons & Sparks, in press). First, the staff developer would describe the research on effective teaching (PRESENTATION) in enough detail to enable teachers to understand the concepts, research questions, methodology, and findings of studies related to a particular facet of the teaching/learning process. These would not be presented in an already summarized, reinterpreted, or generalized form, but rather, could be presented in their original forms for teachers to consider. Perhaps most importantly, the component steps of the entire research process, not just the findings, would be presented.

In this view of staff development, MODELING can be broadened to include demonstrations of the use of research concepts, questions, and data collection methodology, and findings, in relation to examining actual classroom practices and instructional decision-making. In this way, a reflective and analytical instructional problem-solving process (Schmuck, Chesler, & Lippett, 1966;

Hopkins, 1982) or action research process (Simmons, 1984) is what is being modeled and learned.

PRACTICE AND FEEDBACK would occur as classroom teachers reflectively apply, analyze, and evaluate their classroom practices in light of research they have studied. Research concepts, question posing, data collection and analysis methods, and findings are all components of the instructional problem-solving process which can be practiced and used, first in an isolated step-by-step fashion and then in an integrated and cyclical whole. Similarly, the staff developer's feedback can be carefully directed first at the isolated steps and then at use of the whole process of reflectively analyzing classroom practices in light of research. This is quite a bit more complex than simply providing feedback in terms of the fidelity of classroom teaching behaviors with certain research findings.

COACHING, in this view, is not an activity which aims at helping a teacher to reproduce a given classroom behavior described in research findings. Rather, it is a time for collegial discussion (Little, 1982) concerning teaching and its effects on students. In this way, insights and further questions emerge from the experience of using instructional problem-solving processes to reflectively and analytically consider teaching practices in light of research.

In reviewing the processes used by staff development programs which have successfully produced cognitive development growth in adults, Bents and Howey (1981) offer these guidelines: (1) significant new role-taking experiences should be encouraged; (2) concern should be taken to match the teacher's developmental level and the complexity of the training program; (3) carefully guided and continuous reflection from a variety of perspectives about the process of change occurring and meaning of it for the individual is needed;

(4) a balance between action and discussion/reflection needs to be established; (5) the program needs to be continuous in terms of extending over longer periods of time and of being linked to actual programs and priorities in the teacher's work environment; and (6) a balance should be established between the challenge of cognitive dissonance and appropriate psychological support from peers and knowledge of what is to be expected in the change process itself. These guidelines would seem to agree with and extend the Joyce and Showers (1983) recommendations. In particular, Bents and Howey provide staff developers with deeper insights into the need to provide new, long term experiences designed to cause mild cognitive dissonance and to develop new perspectives on the commonplace through discussion and reflection. In addition, these should be balanced with the familiarity of a focus on the teacher's own work situation, supportive peer interaction, and reassuring knowledge of the cyclical cognitive dissonance - integration growth process itself.

D. program context

The three previous sections on program goals, content, and processes have also indirectly contained recommendations concerning the appropriate context of professionalizing staff development programs. The innovations explored in such programs are more likely to be successful when teachers' perceived them as congruent with their beliefs and having a favorable cost/benefit ratio in terms of their workplace responsibilities (Doyle & Ponder, 1977). The guidelines of both Joyce and Showers (1983) and Bent and Howey (1981) emphasize also that the content of staff development programs be something which can be practiced in the teacher's own work environment.

These research-based findings are congruent with staff developers' "conventional wisdom" concerning the use of school and classroom sites for staff development programs, the importance of teacher readiness and choice regarding program participation, and need for supportive, interactive, long-term program structures in order for complex growth to occur. Finally, as was discussed earlier, Little's (1982) findings and those of Joyce and McKibbon (1982) concerning the importance of school environments which are collegial and supportive of experimentation in teachers' change efforts are relevant here.

E. program participants

We are beginning to have attitude-treatment-interaction (ATI) designed research studies focusing on the differential effectiveness of staff development programs on teachers with contrasting characteristics and attitudes. These factors include the perceived congruence of teachers' beliefs about teaching and the particular program goals, their comprehension of program content, and their judgment of the relative effort of implementing program content versus the effort required (Doyle & Ponder, 1977; Mohlman, Coladarci, and Gage, 1982). Similarly, so-called conventional wisdom of staff developers emphasizes the importance of teachers' volunteer participation in inservice activities so that the negative attitudes accompanying administratively mandated change can be avoided.

In addition, there is evidence from various studies reviewed in Sparks (1983) and Bents and Howey (1981) that teachers' sense of professional self-efficacy and their level of cognitive complexity influence their use of staff development program content.

Finally, we should note that we can pose questions about the impact of various characteristics of the staff developer her/himself on the program's process and impact (Simmons, in process). Literature on this topic is scant thus far.

The Use of Action Research in Staff Development Programs

Action research is one of the best known approaches to the sort of inquiry-oriented, professionalizing staff development which has been described in this paper. At the beginning of this paper, action research was defined as a process of systematic inquiry and of knowledge, skill, and attitude growth in which classroom teachers on either an individual of collaborative basis investigate a self-identified instructional problem and attempt to better understand and improve the teaching-learning process occurring in their classrooms.

Action research has its roots beginning in the 1940's in the work of sociologist, Kurt Lewin, who sought to bring researchers and practitioners together in a collaborative relationship to engage in a variety of applied research projects designed to address pressing social problems. The essence of applied research methodology was used---a cyclical process of fact finding as a basis for identifying problems and goals, the implementation of a (action) strategy for solving the problem, evaluation of the effects of the plan as implemented, and reformulation of the new problem and goals in order to recycle the process (Ketterer, Price, & Politser, 1980).

Through such an approach, Lewin sought to challenge and modify the traditional role of researchers and practitioners as separate groups and to increase the relevance and usefulness of research in helping to bring about social improvements. The other purpose, that of involving practitioners in

action research about problems they had identified in their own work, was intended to develop in them the necessary knowledge, skills, and beliefs in their own efficacy to gradually improve practice and to solve problems in their own settings.

Stephen Corey at Teachers College/Columbia University was among the first to use action research in the field of education. Corey described action research in this way: "The process by which practitioners attempt to study their problems scientifically in order to guide, correct, and evaluate their decisions and actions..." (1953, p. 6). He outlined a series of cyclical steps for the action research process---definition of the problem statement of some hypotheses or questions to investigate, design and implementation of an appropriate treatment, data collection and analysis, and conclusions--- which paralleled those of Lewin earlier.

Corey believed that the value of action research for classroom teachers would be in the degree to which it led to improved educational practices and that the generalizations which emerged would appropriately be limited to that specific classroom situation, not to a broad, similar population. Such a cooperative relationship between teachers and researchers would provide a support group in which members could risk change and experimentation and provide a greater range and variety of perceptions from which the study and specific plans for action and change could benefit (Smulyen, 1983).

Figure 2 presents a model of the component steps of the action research process as synthesized from descriptions and recommendations in the literature. This approach is used with classroom teachers in one particular university sponsored, field-based, staff development program (Simmons, in process; Simmons & Sparks, in press).

FIGURE 2: ACTION RESEARCH CYCLICAL PROCESS

1) Identification of instructional problem area and specific research question(s) to be investigated.
2) Review of literature and current practice related to instructional problem area.
3) Select or develop data collection instrument(s).
4) Design and implement new instructional practice (treatment).
5) Collect and analyze appropriate data.
6) Draw conclusions regarding specific research questions investigated.
7) Develop recommendations and questions for re-cycling action research process.

In the years since Corey, action research has risen and fallen in its use and acceptance. It has been criticized as scientifically weak in its methodology, actually harmful or at least over promising its goal of improving school practices, and as impractical in reliance on a collaborative relationship between researchers and practitioners who have different perspectives, norms, and work demands (Hodgkinson, 1957; Kemmis, 1980). In comparing the approach of practitioner action research with other educational improvement efforts, important distinctions can be noted in this area of the relationship between researchers and practitioners. Generally, classroom teachers have had a role serving as research study subjects for external investigators or ~~occasionally as research study subjects for external investigators or~~ occasionally as research collaborators working with external investigators. In either case, the research questions being investigated are

ones posed and developed either entirely or largely by outsiders. In practitioner action researach, on the other hand, the substance and direction of the research investigation are identified by practitioners themselves, and they are actively involved in implementing every step of the action research process (see Figure 2).

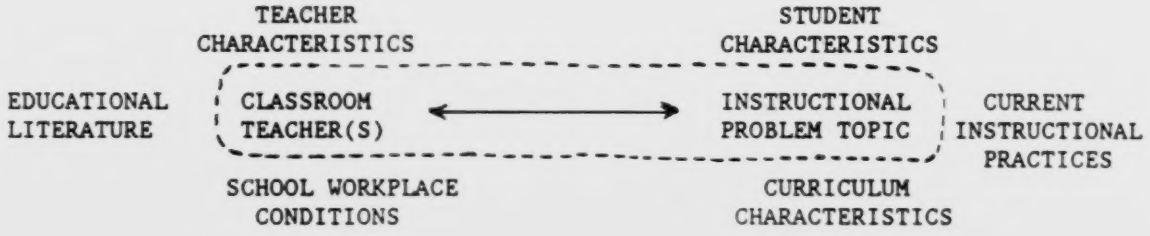
The surge of federal money spent on social and educational problems beginning in the 1960's served to deepen the chasm which existed between researchers and practitioners because the new funding model was one which directed substantial amounts of money away from practitioner-directed improvement activities and into researcher-managed research studies instead. However, through the influence of several forces in the 1970's, including the teacher center movement (e.g. Devaney, 1977) and the emergence of a more developmental and clinical approach to staff development (e.g. Berliner, 1978) and supervision (e.g. Glickman, 1981), teachers have been encouraged to pursue their own meaningful professional development opportunities. Smulyan (1983) states that these influences served to increase and redirect the use of action research again towards practitioner-initiated studies in which researchers served as consultants. This emphasis on teacher empowerment and capacity building is related also to the issues surrounding school workplace conditions and the emergence of teaching as a profession which have been discussed earlier in this paper.

> Practitioner involvement in action research also addressed growing concerns during the 1970's that traditional staff development programs did not meet teacher needs. Action research would provide teachers with the opportunity to gain knowledge and skill in research methods and applications and to become more aware of options and possibilities for change (Tickunoff, Ward, & Griffin, 1979). Teachers participating in action research would become more critical and reflective about their own practice. Elliott (1977) quotes one teacher involved in an action research program who said, "Indeed, the value of this research to us may be in the analysis the teachers make of their methods and their whole approach to

> teaching" (p. 13). Teachers' heightened perceptions and understanding gives them greater control over their own behavior and makes them independent of others for professional growth (Elliott, 1977; Mosher 1974; Pine, 1981). McLaughlin and Marsh (1978) saw staff development through action research as a model for professional growth and an ongoing process of problem-solving and program building within a school. (Smulyan, 1983, p. 9-10)

Figure 3 presents a model of the use of practitioner action research as a staff development experience. It places the classroom teacher's efforts to investigate and experiment with new instructional practices in her/his classroom or school in broader context. These contextual influences include the: (1) classroom teacher's characteristics; (2) students' characteristics; (3) curriculum characteristics; (4) current instructional practices in the classroom, school, and educational field in general; (5) educational literature; and (6) school workplace conditions at the colleague, building, district and national levels.

FIGURE 3: THE ACTION RESEARCH STAFF DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE IN CONTEXT



Such a model helps us as staff developers to focus on the role of the classroom teacher as an instructional decision maker, that is, as an active agent, within the context of the other variables identified. The model also helps us to explicitly address each variable and the interactions among them in staff development program content as the teacher grapples with a particular instructional problem area through action research. As was stated earlier,

typical one-afternoon staff development programs focus on the teacher's awareness of new instructional practices, on notable student characteristics, or on new curriculum. Rarely is the integration and interaction of these factors addressed in a long-term, reflective, analytical manner. Finally, the model highlights that the action research staff development experience is probably unique in providing opportunities for practitioners to become thoughtful and critical readers of current educational literature (not just their findings and conclusions) as it relates to the selected topic area.

Several recent projects and reports attest to the revival of action research in the 1970's and 1980's as a means of both staff development and school improvement and of knowledge generation. These examples would include the work done by Clark & Florio-Ruane (1984), Hord (1981), Huling (1981), Little (1981), Oja & Pine (1983), Simmons (1984), and Tikunoff, Ward, and Griffin (1979). In addition, Lieberman and Miller (1984), Morris et al. (1979), Nixon (1981), and Tikunoff and Mergendoller (1983) provide helpful summaries and analyses of various projects and outcomes in sites where action research has been used.

Reported Benefits of Action Research Experience for Classroom Teachers

The focus here will be on the professional development outcomes which could be hypothesized to occur or which have been found to occur with teachers participating in action research activities. There is actual empirical support for some of these participant outcomes, while in other cases, these exist as hypotheses which are logically linked to work done in related studies of teacher education/staff development or school improvement programs. A few studies will be cited to substantiate the list above and to guide the reader further. In general, these participant outcomes are only beginning to be

investigated, so much work remains yet to be done in this area (Simmons, 1984).

An analysis (Simmons, in process) of the available literature and my own professional experience in this area indicates that the professional development effects for teachers participating in action research projects could include the following outcomes: (1) acquiring new knowledge concerning effective teaching-learning- schooling; (2) acquiring new knowledge concerning research; (3) development of new theories of action concerning their work as classroom teachers; (4) changes in thinking skills, habits, or styles (e.g. problem-solving skills, cognitive complexity or flexibility, level of cognitive development); (5) changes in attitudes toward themselves as teachers (e.g. beliefs concerning their own professional efficacy); (6) changes in attitudes toward the need for on-going professional development for themselves as teachers; (7) changes in attitudes toward research and its usefulness for themselves as teachers; (8) changes in attitudes toward the process of change; (9) changes in patterns of communication and collegiality; (10) changes in actual teacher practices in either the classroom and/or school; and (11) changes in student knowledge, behavior, or attitudes in the classroom and/or school. These outcomes involve teacher knowledge (#1 & 2), thinking skills (#3), more conscious decision- making (#4), attitudes (#5, 6, 7, & 8), collegial networking (#9), and classroom practices (#10) as well as possible student growth (#11).

Huling (1981) found that the teachers who participated in an interactive research and development project (IR & D---another term for collaborative action research between university researchers and K-12 school practitioners) demonstrated significantly greater changes in concerns about the use of research findings and practices and higher research-teaching- development skills than a group of similar teachers who did not participate in the IR & D

project. The IR & D teachers demonstrated a positive attitude about the use of research findings and practices in teaching. However, they did not demonstrate a significantly higher interest in professional development than the other group of teachers. In the same study, significant changes in student behavior and attitudes in the classroom of the participating teachers were reported.

Changes in participants' patterns of collegiality, communication, and networking with other educators in the workplace have been reported by Little (1981), and the potential importance of this as a means of school-wide improvement noted.

Sanders and McCutcheon (1984) review the outcomes of various studies on practitioner action research experiences in order to analyze the development of new or the gradual evolution of previous "theories of action" which teachers possess. They explain these as "the conceptual structures and visions that provide our reasons for acting as we do and for choosing the activities, curriculum materials, and other things that we choose in order to be effective" (p. 5). Sanders and McCutcheon believe that the teacher's continuous revision of such theories of action is occurring not only during more formal inquiry experiences such as action research but also due to the implicit process of "learning on the job" which occurs for teachers.

> Teachers say that they learn how to teach effectively through experience, which makes sense. However, teachers do not learn how to teach simply through experience; rather, they learn through a process of practical inquiry that enables them to discover effective actions and develop effective theories, and to distinguish those from others that are not effective for them personally under the practical circumstances they work in. [....] Effective theories of action are not <u>acquired</u> so much as they are <u>developed</u> by a teacher. Teachers develop internalized, tested theories of action as the residue of a series of small, specific experiences that have the character of small studies or investigations. While few teachers have been trained explicitly to do this kind of inquiry, they engage in it informally as an implicit facet

> of their work. Through such a process of inquiry, teachers develop theories of action. (p. 14-15)

Evidence of such changes in a teacher's "theories of action" would seem to imply integrated changes in a teacher's knowledge of effective teaching-learning-schooling and his/her sense of professional efficacy and purpose.

The work of Oja (1983) and Pine has involved studying the processes as well as the outcomes of teachers' participation in action research. Their study has been designed using ATI case study methodology as well as ethnographic approaches to examine the system-wide impact of the collaborative action research project which they directed. Their study conclusions state: "this study has documented the teacher's ability to assume multiple perspectives, utilize a wider variety of coping behaviors in response to school and team pressures, employ a broader repertoire or group process and change strategies and be "more effective" in many collaborative research decisions because of the ability to be self-reflective, self-evaluative, and interpersonally sensitive" (Oja, 1983, p. 182). The result of this participation, according to Pine (1981) is that teachers become more flexible in their thinking, are more open to new ideas, and are more able to solve new problems in the future.

Simmons (in process) has found through anonymous, self-report data that classroom teachers carrying out individual action research projects with a collegial support group structure did believe that various positive changes in themselves had occurred as a result of that experience. In order of their reported frequency, these changes which the teachers identified were: (1) changes in actual classroom practices; (2) changes in their thinking skills, habits, or styles; (3) changes in attitudes toward the need for their own continuous education; (4) changes in new theories of action concerning

their work as classroom teachers; (5) changes in their professional self-efficacy beliefs; and (6) changes in collegial communication habits. This year-long, action research staff development experience occurred within a field-based, graduate degree program for classroom teachers sponsored by a large university. All of the projects were designed and carried out by the practitioners themselves with the staff developer serving as an instructor and facilitator.

Thus, we have not only arguments based on logical reasoning but also empirical evidence that participant action research can serve as a valuable staff development experience resulting in growth related to the teacher's professional knowledge-base, skills, and attitudes which the current reform literature emphasizes. In addition, because the focus of practitioner action research is on teacher-identified concerns and on the teacher's active role in experimentation, analysis, and collegial communication, it also becomes possible to consider the influence of the action research experience in improving the school workplace environment.

Dilemmas Found in Using Action Research as a Staff Development Experience

Along with the potential of action research which has just been discussed, several serious cautions must also be noted concerning the use of action research as a professionalizing staff development experience for classroom teachers. These will be discussed in terms of the earlier Figure 1 model showing the five components of any staff development program (as adapted from Sparks, 1983). These components are: context, goals, content, processes, and participants. When it is not self-evident, these cautions concerning the use of practitioner action research will be briefly discussed in terms of this paper's emphasis on what is needed to prepare genuinely professional classroom

teachers and of related school workplace conditions and staff development program effectiveness issues identified earlier.

The term "dilemmas' (Berlak & Berlak, 1981) will be used to characterize these cautionary aspects because of their interactive, contradictory, complex nature. Careful program planning and evaluation by a staff developer in terms of any one or more of these dilemmas necessarily results in corresponding influences on the remainder of the dilemma areas. Such flux underscores the sensitive and demanding nature of effective staff development program operation with a given set of professionalizing goals, classroom teacher participants, and school sites. Such a dynamic, systems view is emphasized in both Figure 1 and Figure 3.

A. <u>contextual dilemmas of action research</u>

1. IN SO FAR AS THE ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE OF A SCHOOL FAVORS THOSE WHO LIKE, OR AT LEAST ACCEPT, THE STATUS QUO AS "DESIRABLE REALITY", PRACTITIONERS ENGAGED IN ACTION RESEARCH WILL BE VIEWED AS MALCONTENTS OR TROUBLE-MAKERS.

Conversely, if the organizational climate values continuous growth and long-range goal setting by employees as desirable behaviors, then practitioner action research activities will be more congruent with institutional growth and change norms. In the successful staff development and school sites investigated by Little (1982), participation in continuous professional development was viewed as an integral part of the job of teaching, and there was a critical mass of people who were visibly doing so.

A rather subtle but key part of this assessment is the degree to which the role of teachers to genuinely participate in such goal setting for the school and for themselves and their pupils is acknowledged. This was discussed

earlier in this paper in terms of teacher autonomy and the management style of school administrators. The effective schools' literature uses the phrase "creative conflict" among staff to describe their ferment of vital ideas existing in healthy school organizational climates that were investigated.

2. THE AMOUNT OF PROFESSIONAL INTERACTION CONCERNING INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT MATTERS OCCURRING IN THE SCHOOL WILL BE INFLUENCED BY: (A) THE DEGREE OF MUTUAL TRUST AND RESPECT EXISTING ON BOTH PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LEVELS BETWEEN TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS AND AMONG TEACHERS, AND (B) THE EXISTENCE OF A COMMON PEDAGOGICAL LANGUAGE TO DESCRIBE AND ANALYZE INSTRUCTIONAL EVENTS AS SOMETHING SEPARATE FROM CRITICIZING THE PARTICULAR EDUCATOR(S) INVOLVED.

Due to the frequent lack of a common, technical language among practitioners to describe the teaching-learning process and to the management-worker tensions created by typically perfunctory performance evaluation of teachers by administrators, there is a heavy ego involvement of classroom teachers in their work. This may be expressed as failing to distinguish between themselves as people and their effectiveness as teachers. The overall typical school climate does not encourage practitioners to focus either privately or publicly on areas of desired growth (Galloway, Seltzer, & Whitfield, 1980). Identifying such areas, rather, is generally seen as "confessing to deficits" and/or as a professional and personal assault upon the individual practitioner.

The formation of such trust and professional self-confidence to deal with one's own possible growth areas can be aided by the communication of new professional norms emphasizing continuous growth and development of new collegial peer groups sharing such norms of experimentation (Little, 1984).

Adequate care and time should be invested by the staff developer in creating this individual readiness and colleague support system if practitioner action research is to successfully take root. This peer group may exist as a sub-part of one particular school building and enjoy the convenience of working together or benefit from some degree of anonymity and freshness such as occurs when peer support group members come from different school sites. This peer group support may come from a team of practitioners working together on the same topic (i.e. collaborative action research) or from interaction among individuals investigating their own topics but sharing in the action research process.

3. IN ORDER FOR PRACTITIONER ACTION RESEARCH TO BE INSTITUTIONALIZED, CERTAIN CHANGES ARE NECESSARY IN THE TIME SCHEDULE AND EVALUATION/ REWARD STRUCTURE OF CLASSROOM TEACHERS' WORK LIVES.

Such changes involve modifications in what teachers typically do during their daily schedule by providing time for collaborative dialogue, for professional study and related planning for new approaches, and for data gathering and interpretation in relation to the overall effectiveness of these innovations. Because of the already fast-paced, stressful nature of classroom teaching as work, care must be taken by staff developers to develop adequate, stimulating opportunities for practitioner action researchers to genuinely and reflectively investigate and have dialogue about instructional matters of concern to them. Such time and activity modifications in teachers' lives may be fruitfully linked to current discussions about career ladders, master teachers, and mini-sabbaticals spent within the school building or district but away from full-time classroom teaching duties.

However, it is not enough to just provide such time for these activities---they must become activities for which practitioners receive constructive feedback and relevant rewards from school officials. Unfortunately, it is noteworthy that the same criterion-referenced approach to measurement emphasizing "deviations from perfection" is used to evaluate teachers and pupils in our school system today. Given what this paper has said about the need for continuous professional growth in today's world, it would seem correspondingly appropriate to shift to an evaluation system which at least to some small or large degree incorporates recognition for one's margin of improvement during the school year. In addition, at least a portion of these rewards should be intrinsic rather than extrinsic in order to strengthen the internal motivation of the practitioners themselves. This relates staff development to what we know concerning Maslowian psychological states (McKibbin & Joyce, 1980) and to autonomous cognitive development stages in teachers (Bents & Howey, 1981; Oja, 1980).

4. WHILE IT IS TRUE THAT THE FOCUS TOPIC OF ACTION RESEARCH SHOULD BE SELECTED BY THE PRACTITIONER(S) IN RELATION TO HIS/HER OWN SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONAL INTERESTS, AT THE SAME TIME, IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER THE DEGREE OF MATCH BETWEEN THAT FOCUS TOPIC AND THE GOALS, NEEDS, AND RESOURCES OF THE WIDER SCHOOL BUILDING AND DISTRICT SYSTEM.

One of the influences on implementation efforts of any new practice will be the degree to which the practitioner action researcher and critical others in the school environment perceive that there is strong support of it (Little, 1982; Perry, 1980; Whitford, 1983). This is true both in relation to the specific new classroom practice being investigated through action research as

well as to the new role of the classroom teacher as an action researcher in his/her own classroom.

5. IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER THE DEGREE OF MATCH BETWEEN THE ACTION RESEARCH FOCUS TOPIC AND: (A) THE AMOUNT OF TEACHER CONTROL AND AUTONOMY ALLOWED BY THE SYSTEM: AND (B) THE AMOUNT OF CONTROL AND AUTONOMY WHICH TEACHERS PERCEIVE THAT THEY ACTUALLY HAVE.

Similar to the point above, the specific focus topic which classroom teachers choose for action research will often be pragmatically selected as inside of the boundary line of decisions over which they believe they have some control. When this is not the case, additional constraints will usually emerge to the implementation of the action research project. These constraints may be ultimately defeating for the novice practitioner action researcher or they may probe to be "consciousness raising" and lead to eventual resolution of the initial conflict. The danger for the action research staff development experience is that such frustration, coupled with feelings of powerlessness, may prove to be more damaging than inspiring to the classroom teacher who is just trying out a new role as inquirer.

The idea of practitioner action research in today's school workplace environment (described earlier) would seem to force that questions concerning the range and limits of teacher decision-making power and autonomy be raised. Whitford (1983) suggests that there are three approaches to dealing with this dilemma: (1) for the teachers to select topic areas which are within their own sphere of decision-making control; (2) for teachers and school officials to collaborate in the choice of a problem area, in conducting the investigation, and in planning for use of the study findings; or (3) for changes to be made in

restructuring teachers' current job expectation, rewards, and access to policy decision-making in the school workplace.

B. goal and content dilemmas of action research

1. THE PROPER GOAL OF ACTION RESEARCH STAFF DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES FOR PRACTITIONERS IS NOT TO TURN THEM INTO RESEARCHERS BUT TO ENABLE THEM TO FUNCTION MORE EFFECTIVELY AND PROFESSIONALLY IN THEIR ROLE AS CLASSROOM TEACHERS.

Learning to use the inquiry processes associated with action research is a means to an end, not an end in itself for classroom teachers. As such, action research is more properly viewed as an approach to staff development rather than as the ultimate goal or content of staff development programs.

Of course, when action research techniques are first being demonstrated and practiced by teachers, it is natural to have the newness and challenge of action research itself appear to predominate in staff development program goals and content. However, there is actually a dual learning process occurring for the teachers: learning about action research inquiry process techniques and learning about a specific instructional topic (e.g. classroom management or teacher feedback) which is the focus of their action research investigations. It is important, therefore, for the staff developer to periodically re-assert that action research is a means or a staff development program approach to achieving the end goals of improving K-12 instructional and professionalizing teaching.

2. CONVENTIONAL, LINEAR, NEEDS ASSESSMENT/PROGRAM PLANNING EFFORTS MANAGED BY STAFF DEVELOPERS MUST BE MODIFIED IN ACTION RESEARCH STAFF DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES. THESE MODIFICATIONS INVOLVE THE STAFF DEVELOPER MORE AS A FACILITATOR AND PLACE GREATER EMPHASIS

ON PRACTITIONER INITIATIVE AND RESPONSIBILITY IN PROFESSIONAL SELF- ASSESSMENT, RESOURCE IDENTIFICATION, AND IMPLEMENTATION. THESE MODIFICATIONS ALSO LEAD TO MORE DE-CENTRALIZED, LOOSELY STRUCTURED, STAFF DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN ORDER TO ALLOW FOR EVOLVING CHANGES IN PARTICIPANT GROWTH GOALS OVER TIME.

These changes are related to the teacher-empowerment character of action research. For the staff developer, a tension exists between recognizing the importance of practitioners' own perceptions and thinking about their instructional practices on one hand, and, the opposing need to provide teachers with a larger, more complex, professional vision and with mild cognitive dissonance resulting from the experience of considering new information about effective teaching/learning/schooling through the staff development program. This perspective that fostering teachers' awareness of their own ever more complex instructional needs and of related professional growth resources makes conventional needs assessment efforts seem like trying to "hit a moving target".

One outcome of this view is to share major responsibility for needs assessment and professional growth planning from the staff developer with the teacher themselves. This can be expressed as doing staff development "with" practitioners rather than "to" or "for" them. Thus, a teacher's self-directing abilities in such growth efforts should be encouraged rather than diminished.

This respect for the individual concerns of teachers should be tempered during the problem identification stage of the action research process by helping teachers to consider ways in which their concerns mesh with current discussions in educational literature and in their building and district settings. Thus, explicit attention to the dialectic which can exist between the perceived needs of the individual teacher and the needs of the workplace

and the wider profession should be part of the action research experience. Guiding teachers in making such analytical decisions themselves about the goals and content of the staff development action research experience is in contrast to the more typical linear situation of needs assessment and program planning managed by the staff developer her/himself.

3. GIVEN THAT TEACHERS TYPICALLY BELIEVE THAT THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING IS PERSONAL, INTUITIVE, AND SITUATION-SPECIFIC, IT IS IMPORTANT IN ACTION RESEARCH STAFF DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES TO CLARIFY THE APPROPRIATE ROLE OF RESEARCH AND OTHER FACTORS IN INSTRUCTIONAL DECISION-MAKING BY TEACHERS ACCORDING TO THIS NEW VIEW OF TEACHING AS PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY.

As teachers' knowledge-base and critical thinking skills are strengthened through action research experiences, care must be taken to avoid two extreme but predictable reactions: (1) all teaching practices which have not been supported by research findings are therefore wrong; and (2) there are so many factors involved in doing worthwhile research on teaching that it is impossible to determine what effective teaching really is, and so therefore, research is a waste of time for the practitioner.

The staff developer needs to present a balanced view of both the limitations of research (and other factors such as community values) and of how it can appropriately inform classroom practices. Otherwise, it is possible for such misunderstandings of the proper role of research to exacerbate teachers' feelings of professional dependency (i.e. "research will tell me exactly what to do") and vulnerability (i.e. "everything I do must be wrong") and to undermine their own identity as active and capable decision-makers.

4. WHEN TEACHING PRACTITIONERS HOW TO CONDUCT ACTION RESEARCH, IT IS IMPORTANT TO TEACH THE ESSENTIALS OF BOTH QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE APPROACHES TO THE INQUIRY PROCESS AND TO DIRECTLY ADDRESS THE MISCONCEPTIONS THEY HAVE CONCERNING WHAT RESEARCH IS.

Typical teachers have various layperson misconceptions about research (e.g. "research is just a process of manipulating evidence to prove one's opinion" or "research is statistics") and have had negative teacher evaluation experiences with the misuse of research (e.g. "research says that everyone should..."). Such misconceptions are maintained in part also by: (1) practitioners' difficulties in easily accessing educational research literature; (2) differences in language, activities, and apparent thinking style between researchers and practitioners (Hogben, 1982; Lieberman & Miller, 1984; Sanders & McCutcheon, 1984); and (3) the typical lack of methods instruction which spans across both qualitative and quantitative inquiry approaches at a level of understanding which is appropriate for classroom practitioners. These misconceptions and "research methods anxiety" among practitioners fail to recognize the valid, reliable, and objective nature of the reasoning process which is fundamental to research and to realize that the basic purpose of research is simply to investigate something through asking and answering questions.

Besides addressing these misconceptions directly, another way to deal with them is to systematically guide teachers in a step-by-step thinking and reading process when they first encounter research studies done by others, particularly those which present conflicting findings. Careful consideration of how such components as the researcher's assumptions, the characteristics of the research subjects, the types of research questions asked, and the specific data collection procedures used all influence a study's conclusions can help to

deepen practitioners' knowledge and critical thinking skills. It can be helpful, too, to use examples which demonstrate how a particular topic has been investigated over the years from different perspectives and in increasingly sophisticated ways as each study builds on what was discovered in previous investigations.

These three examples of program content can help the classroom practitioner get "inside of the researcher's mind"-- that is, to focus on the reasoning process of asking and answering questions and on the growing body of knowledge which results for practitioners and researchers to use in their specific work.

5. IN PLANNING THE CONTENT OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS TO HELP TEACHERS IN ACQUIRING ACTION RESEARCH SKILLS, CAREFUL ATTENTION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO INCLUDING: (A) CLASSROOM INQUIRY PROCESS SKILLS, AS WELL AS SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF INSTRUCTIONAL DECISION-MAKING INVOLVING A TEACHER'S (B) PROCEDURAL KNOWLEDGE (i.e. HOW) AND (C) CONDITIONAL KNOWLEDGE (i.e. WHEN AND WHY) RELATED TO EFFECTIVE TEACHING. IN ADDITION, AN EMPHASIS SHOULD BE PLACED ON DEVELOPING TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT IS INVOLVED IN EDUCATIONAL CHANGE PROCESSES BOTH IN INDIVIDUALS AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS.

Particularly for novice practitioner action researchers, there is a need for the staff developer to maintain a sensitive balance between sufficient challenge and overwhelming the teacher with new knowledge, experiences, and expectations. Clear demonstrations of the specific action research inquiry process skills and various examples of their use should be provided. As J. W. Little emphasizes, such analytical discussions of instructional matters should be both practical and theoretical, but always be practical---"philosophy or

theory must always be brought to bear on specific actions in the classroom," (1982, p. 334). The material thus presented should become increasingly more complex in relation to the growth and needs of practitioners as they gain more experience as action researchers.

As teachers are learning to conduct action research on any particular topic area, all three types of learning identified above are relevant. In the action research staff development experience, practitioners are forced to cope with three levels of ambiguity: (1) how should I proceed to investigate this topic area in my classroom?; (2) what do research and other factors have to say which is pertinent to this topic area?; (3) what should I do about this topic area in my specific teaching situation? In addition, staff developers must sensitively manage the process of developing teachers' professional knowledge and simultaneously enhancing their feelings of self-efficacy toward achieving such new professional expectations and roles. For these reasons, action research is an emotionally as well as cognitively complex staff development experience for classroom teachers.

Thus, there is the danger of novice action researchers confusing the "trees for the woods" if too much new and unstructured content material is carelessly provided by the staff developer. Doyle & Ponder (1977) remind us of the need for this balance in terms of their finding that teachers' decisions about implementing a new practice are made in terms of the degree of usefulness which the practice appears to have and their judgment of the relative cost in time and effort it would require to implement it. On such judgments hinge teacher decisions about the use or rejection of new innovations of any type including action research.

C. process dilemmas of action research

1. THE STAFF DEVELOPER AS WELL AS THE PROGRAM AS IT'S IMPLEMENTED SHOULD MODEL THE ESSENCE OF ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS BEING TAUGHT: COMPREHENSIVE, LITERATURE-BASED PLANNING WITH VIGOROUS EFFORTS TO REVISE THE PROGRAM BASED ON THOUGHTFUL ANALYSIS OF THE EMPIRICAL RESULTS OBTAINED.

2. THE ACTION RESEARCH STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM SHOULD BE DESIGNED TO INCORPORATE THE BEST OF WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT EFFECTIVE STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES: (A) PRESENTATION AND MODELING OF NEW IDEAS; (B) OPPORTUNITY FOR PARTICIPANTS TO PRACTICE THESE WITH FEEDBACK AND COACHING AVAILABLE; (C) CONSIDERATION OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN PARTICIPANTS; AND (D) ATTENTION TO PROVIDING A BALANCE OF BOTH ADEQUATE CHALLENGE AND PERSONAL SUPPORT.

3. THE TIME FRAME OF ACTION RESEARCH AS A STAFF DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE SHOULD BE OF ADEQUATE DURATION TO ALLOW SUCH COMPLEX LEARNING BY THE TEACHER TO OCCUR THROUGH THE EXPERIENCE OF CONDUCTING ONE OR MORE GENUINE CLASSROOM INVESTIGATIONS, BUT YET NOT STRETCH ON ENDLESSLY SO THAT THE TEACHER'S SENSE OF CLOSURE, GROWTH, AND ACCOMPLISHMENT IS LOST.

This is a delicate matter for the staff developer to manage, particularly because there is great individual difference in how much ambiguity various teachers can productively tolerate and because it is difficult to standardize the length of action research projects in which different questions and treatments are used. The cyclical nature of the action research process is of some value here because it provides a natural, although temporary, point of synthesis and closure for the teacher. It can be especially helpful also for

the staff developer to emphasize that the outcomes of any investigation include both conclusions and further questions which are now seen as important based on what was discovered in a study.

4. GIVEN THE TYPICAL SCHOOL WORKPLACE CONDITIONS OF TEACHERS, SPECIAL ATTENTION MUST BE GIVEN BY THE STAFF DEVELOPER TO CREATING A PEER SUPPORT STRUCTURE FOR PRACTITIONERS ENGAGING IN ACTION RESEARCH. THIS PEER GROUP MAY BE A TEAM ENGAGING IN COLLABORATIVE ACTION RESEARCH OR A SET OF TEACHERS FROM VARIOUS SCHOOL SITES WHO ARE EACH DOING INDIVIDUAL ACTION RESEARCH INVESTIGATIONS. SUCH A SUPPORT GROUP SHOULD PROVIDE A BALANCE OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENCOURAGEMENT, SHARING, CLARIFICATION OF NEW IDEAS, AND COGNITIVE DISSONANCE TO STIMULATE GROWTH.

Such support is essential when people are engaged in new learning and new role experiences. J. W. Little provides this description of the potential threat present in staff development experiences such as action research:

> . . . the cultivation of precise and concrete talk about teaching is not without its risks. The more widely attempted is a language of description and analysis, the more it exposes the knowledge, skills, and experiences of teachers; the more evident is the tie to (scrutiny of) classroom practice in teachers' daily interactions with each other or administrators, the more pressing become the demands on professional competence and personal self-esteem. As demands escalate, so do teachers' requirements for "support" in the form of clear, public, and visible sanctions for participation. It is in these terms that teachers distinguish "threatening" from nonthreatening occasions for improvement. (1982, p. 334)

There is great danger that, in the verbal interaction of such peer support groups, feelings of emotional closeness and pedagogical politeness will create a taboo against directly examining ideas with intellectual rigor. The staff developer must, therefore, help teachers develop new norms

for both the character and importance of such collegial interaction. Such discussions may be assessed in terms of being personally supportive of risk-taking, having a specific focus (rather than wandering), seeking out divergent viewpoints, and focusing on so-called "answers" as well as additional questions that could be asked. The interaction in such a peer group offers not only support regarding the new action research experience but also has the potential of influencing collegial communication beyond the action research group.

It is important also that the time and involvement demanded by such an action research group be realistic in terms of the already tightly scheduled, fast-paced life of classroom teachers today.

5. HELPING TEACHERS MAINTAIN A BALANCE OF (A) FREQUENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFLECTION (i.e., "WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?") AND (B) A STEADY MOMENTUM OF ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR ACTION RESEARCH INVESTIGATIONS SEEMS LINKED TO DEVELOPING A SENSE OF TEACHERS' OWNERSHIP AND COMMITMENT TO SUCH INQUIRY-ORIENTED, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

In comparing different configurations of participant membership among teams of educators involved in interactive R & D on schooling, Lieberman and Jacullo Noto (1983) found contrasting levels of actual involvement and commitment to the investigations as they were being conducted. Because of the long-term nature of action research investigation and the press of many other things which teachers must do in their jobs, it is easy to imagine that, like an athlete's exercising, it is far more difficult to begin again than it is to steadily maintain an activity over a long period of time.

The role of reflection seems potentially twofold: (1) as a means of motivating such active involvement (above) by focusing on the personal

importance and meaning of events; and (2) as a means of revealing valuable individual insights, developing new ideas, and analyzing and synthesizing current ideas. Its role is as a counterbalance to the action component of the action research experience. Its goal is to find meaning in the action which occurs.

D. participant dilemmas of action research

1. AT THIS POINT IN THE HISTORY OF ACTION RESEARCH AS A STAFF DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE, IT SEEMS POSSIBLE TO POSE APTITUDE-TREATMENT-INTERACTION (ATI) QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF THE ACTION RESEARCH EXPERIENCE ON CLASSROOM TEACHERS POSSESSING DIFFERENT CHARACTERISTICS.

While the purpose of action research as a staff development experience is to strengthen teachers' professional knowledge, classroom effectiveness, inquiry skills, professional self-efficacy beliefs, critical thinking habits, collegial attitudes, and professional autonomy and commitment, etc., it seems important to ask if a minimal level of such teacher characteristics is not essential for a teacher to perceive action research as a stimulating and attractive staff development experience. Teachers who lack such characteristics to an extreme degree may perceive action research as threatening, ambiguous, and a waste of time. How such qualities of teachers relate to the differential effectiveness of action research as a staff development experience is a complex question deserving further attention by both researchers and staff developers.

2. IF STAFF DEVELOPERS ARE TO SUCCESSFULLY GUIDE CLASSROOM TEACHERS IN ACTION RESEARCH EXPERIENCES, THERE WOULD BE SOME

RELATED IMPLICATIONS FOR WHAT STAFF DEVELOPERS WOULD NEED TO KNOW, THEIR ATTITUDES, AND THE FACILITATING SKILLS THEY WOULD NEED TO POSSESS.

Besides the obvious importance of knowledge of appropriate classroom inquiry processes and knowledge of the research on effective teaching/learning/schooling, this topic of staff developer qualifications deserves further investigation. Such a role would seem to be characterized as one involving maintaining a foot in both the world of practice and the world of research.

E. Recommendations for the Future

This paper has reviewed what is known about effective staff development and the issues surrounding teaching as an emerging profession and current school workplace conditions as a backdrop for examining the potential and the problems associated with practitioner action research as a staff development experience. The history of the use of action research in education has about a thirty-year time span, although that has been marked by its irregular use and shifting popularity. It has been criticized as being neither rigorous enough to add to what is known through research nor as being compatible with the demands of what it means to be a classroom teacher.

With current discussions occurring about reforming schools and enhancing teaching as a professional occupation, it seems that perhaps action research has finally found its appropriate time period in which to be taken seriously and to be implemented and evaluated rigorously. There is greater recognition today than ever before that various staff development formats are needed to correspond with different program purposes, contextual influences, and

participant needs. In such an atmosphere, perhaps action research can find its proper place.

There are, of course, aspects of action research as a staff development experience that warrant further attention. These would include:

- There is a need to design, implement, and evaluate various configurations of action research programs--e.g., with and without university involvement, across educator role groups, as teams working intensively in one school site and as individuals from various sites being enriched by their diverse perspectives, etc.
- Greater attention should be given to investigating ATI issues involving participant characteristics in action research.
- Action research resource materials and process guidelines need to be developed and more widely disseminated and reviewed.
- Efforts to improve the school workplace as a more professional setting should be encouraged both through the use of action research and all kinds of other reform suggestions.
- Issues related to the appropriate preparation of staff developers to direct action research experiences should be addressed.

The future is, indeed, challenging and exciting!

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